

**August 23, 2012**

Written by Jeff Angus

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[Our 2012-13 Fantasy Guide is lockout proof.](#) What do I mean by that?

Well, if the season starts in December, we will keep things updated throughout September, October, and November. Injuries, trades, late signings, training camp invites, you name it. It is our leg up on the competition – because we release the guide as a PDF and not in print, we are able to keep it updated and current.

And it is a great way to support the site by picking one up. We offer a ton of great free content (columns, the forums, the ramblings), and we get our support primarily from Guide purchases. Tell your friends about it if you want a challenge in your pool next year.

[Taylor Hall](#) will be an Oiler for at least eight more seasons (provided he isn't traded). He signed a seven-year extension worth \$6 million per season.

A very reasonable cap hit, and it will likely set Eberle and Nugent-Hopkins in line behind him. Hall has battled injury problems but there is no denying his immense offensive upside. Great

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move by Tambellini and company here.

A cool blog post on hockey stick art. [Who wouldn't want that coffee table?](#)

[Steve Dangle has a terrific interview](#) with Leafs goaltender [Ben Scrivens](#) right here. I like Scrivens and think he's a terrific sleeper pick for 2012-13 (provided the Leafs don't acquire a proven starter). Scrivens is very articulate with his answers. Here's an example, regarding fan and media attention and reaction:

*I mean, it's one of those problems that you run into when people genuinely care about what they're seeing, but they have a lack of control over the outcome. You can't fault any of the fans, you can't fault any of the media really – well, maybe the media at times because they're getting paid to be a little more sure-sighted than what they are at times.*

*But again, at the same time, the fact that people care that much that they're looking for anything that they can pull out of the data in order to find answers for what's going on, or to find answers or changes that could maybe help the team even when they're doing well. That's what fandom is. It's cheering for your team and trying to look at it as objectively as possible to try and help that team get even better.*

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*The unfortunate thing that comes into play a lot of times is misinformation, overgeneralization, you know 'If they only do this, if they did action X, then result Y is going to come.' Again, getting back to my thought about hockey being so dynamic, it's the same principle there. There's no 'this simple action is going to change this simple outcome.'"*

Brendan Ross [delivers his preliminary rankings for the 2013 draft right here.](#)

*"1. Nathan MacKinnon, C/RW (Halifax Mooseheads, QMJHL)*

*MacKinnon is an exceptionally gifted hockey player with the rare combination of elite mobility, a pro-caliber shot and creative hands capable of creating scoring chances at will. His vision, hockey sense and overall well-rounded game will leave twenty-nine NHL teams envious of MacKinnon's future NHL team as he is destined to become the next "franchise player". With NHL superstar potential, MacKinnon is the early favourite to be selected first overall and his recent showing at the 2012 Ivan Hlinka Tournament where he tallied 11 points in five games leaves no doubters at this point in time.*

*Interesting Fact: Originating from Cole Harbour and taking his skills to Shattuck St. Mary's, Nathan MacKinnon has been compared to [Sidney Crosby](#) from a young age as the young sensation has shared many similar hockey paths."*

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Brendan Ross didn't stop there, either. [Here are his prospect ramblings from Dobber Prospects.](#)

to your usual daily reads.

Don't forget to check this site out in addition

The [Dallas Stars go one-on-one](#) with top prospect Alex Chiasson – get this kid on your radar if he isn't already. Could be in the top six by the end of the season for Dallas.

Sticking with Dallas – my weekly piece for Defending Big D was an analysis of the defensive group ([from a fantasy hockey perspective](#)).

*“[Philip Larsen](#) – It is difficult to project Larsen's offensive numbers right now, as he has so little experience in an offensive role at the NHL level. He has attributes that many top offensive defensemen possess – he is calm with the puck, he makes great reads, and he skates very well. Dallas will likely use Larsen in a secondary offensive role, as they don't really have any other alternatives on the roster right now.*”

*Larsen was reasonably productive in the SEL, and he posted 22 points in 54 games in his only AHL season. He had only eight points in 55 games for the Stars last season, but his improvement over the course of the season has to be encouraging. He has garnered a few comparisons to [Tobias Enstrom](#) for his hockey sense and ability to excel as an undersized defenseman. Larsen also showed a bit of a physical streak last season – it will be interesting to*

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*see how that side of his game develops (and the potential fantasy hockey benefits in terms of hits and PIM).*

*The slick Danish defenseman could eclipse the 30-point mark with enough power play time.”*

[The Canucks #9 prospect is Alexandre Mallet](#) – Mallet has the upside to be a 15 goal, 150-200 PIM power forward. He’s tough and solid at both ends of the rink, and close to NHL action as he was drafted as a 20-year-old.

*“Mallett finished 2011-12 with 34 goals, 81 points, and 132 PIM in 68 games for the Rimouski Oceanic. He then added 11 goals and 26 points in 21 postseason games. He was the only player in Rumouski to eclipse the 30-goal mark, and the only player to record over 100 PIM, as well.”*

[And the Canucks #8 prospect is Joseph LaBate](#) , a big and rangy forward who has garnered comparisons to [Blake Wheeler](#) and [David Backes](#)

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*“LaBate has the skill set and the frame to develop into a top-six forward at the NHL level. Two things are holding him back at the moment – quickness and strength. LaBate is a great skater once he gets going, but like many young prospects, he needs to improve on his first few steps. He also needs to bulk up a bit, which isn't uncommon when you're a lanky 19 year old. Both issues, thankfully, are quite correctable. What LaBate possesses on the other hand, can't be taught: height (6-4) and hockey sense.”*

The opportunity is there for [Jakub Kindl](#) in Detroit next season. [The Wings would like him to seize it by playing with more of a physical edge, though.](#)

*“One of Kindl's best periods of hockey last year came on Feb. 21 at Chicago, hours after the Wings traded for defenseman [Kyle Quincey](#). Knowing another guy was going to be added to the group, Kindl played with an edge and made good decisions the few times he touched the puck. That's the player the Wings need to see regularly.*

*Kindl has good size at 6-feet-3, 215 pounds, but if he isn't physical, he might as well not be out there. As it stands right now he'll be on the third pairing, but once the Wings have restocked, Kindl is more likely to serve as a reserve. He is playing for a future job, though, which should help with the motivation.”*

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I like Kindl as a player. He doesn't have immense offensive upside, but he should develop into a very solid two-way defenseman capable of putting up 20-30 points, depending on the amount of PP time he receives.

Nice to see Paul Range back in hockey. The two-way defenseman left the league mysteriously a few years ago for personal reasons (and we never found out what they were). At the time, he was a top-four defenseman on Tampa Bay and a big part of their team.

This is a few days old, but interesting nonetheless – [Sergei Samsonov](#) is slated to make a comeback this season. He has been training in Detroit, skating with Igor Larionov.

The San Jose forward group really falls off hard after the top two lines (thanks to the salary cap and a few trades in recent years).

Nashville management on [replacing Suter](#):

*"You can't replace a player like [Ryan Suter](#), but we have the depth and talent to do so by [Roman Josi](#) will take up some minutes.*

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*The coaches will have to get players on the ice in the right situation and with the right combinations."*

[Michal Neuvirth](#) was obviously tired of the lack of news lately, [so he decided to create some.](#)

*"On Ovechkin:*

*"He isn't what he used to be, that's for sure. And if a team like ours wants to have a chance in Stanley Cup, we need Ovi to be the best. We all expect that from him; he has to be the real leader. But it's hard you know, he achieved everything as a player. He was on absolute top, and then one can only fall down. I just hope that Ovi will stop falling and instead stops and maybe tries to get back on top."*

Score one for camp Holtby?

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Justin Goldman, as always, [offers his terrific insights on the situation.](#)

*"I'm also willing to bet that if anyone understands where Neuvirth is coming from, it's Holtby. That is part of the code; you let the media know you want to out-perform your comparable counterpart, but there always exists a very real admiration and respect for them. You maintain a visible friendship, you display traits of being a good teammate, and you are always there to support one another, regardless of what you truly feel under the surface.*

*At least now I can tell people that I know Neuvirth isn't going to roll over. At least we know he means business. And if you ask me, I think his experience and composure does lend a hand to him out-performing Holtby at different points this season."*

[Valtteri Filppula](#) makes a lot of sense in Buffalo – [but will the Wings trade him?](#)

*"The general consensus among Wings fans and blogs seems to be that Filppula is a solid 2-way player, who is used to playing a center role. He did flourish in point scoring when moved to the wing, though his role became more strictly offensive. If utilized as someone who could feed the puck to Vanek and Pominville, you're looking at a player who can win some faceoffs and control*

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*the middle of the ice. His ability to score in the playoffs, the fact that he's only collected 60 penalty minutes in the last three seasons (why yes, that is significantly less than Roy or Hecht), and the fact that he's won a Stanley Cup make him a solid man to plug in to the Sabres' top line."*

I could see an Ehrhoff-Filppula swap happening, but not sure Buffalo would move Ehrhoff. I don't see their other defensemen having enough value to Detroit.

How can Phoenix improve their woeful power play in 2012-13?

*"The future for the power play looks bright as help could be on the way. Oliver Ekman-Larsson is already one of the bets young defensemen in the NHL and can quarterback a top line power play. Ekman-Larsson has eight power play points last season which was 25 percent of his offensive production; an improvement from 18 percent the previous season.*

*In the future, the Coyotes second power play unit could be run by defenseman [David Rundblad](#)*

*Rundblad was acquired from Ottawa along with a second round pick in exchange for [Kyle Turris](#)*

*. Rundblad is a puck moving defenseman with a hard point shot who could see significant time*

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*with the Coyotes soon. Rundblad already recorded a point on the power play during the six games he played with Phoenix.*

*[Brandon Gormley](#) has become somewhat of a power play specialist in the QMJHL. Gormley was the 13th overall pick in the 2010 NHL entry draft. Gormley has a great first pass to start the rush out of the defensive zone and a heavy shot from the point that finds its way to the opposing goalie. The combination of a left handed Gormley and a right handed Rundblad could make a lethal combination in the future.”*

Rundblad and Gormley both project as really good offensive defensemen in the NHL – but will there be enough ice time to go around? As for the forwards... I'd expect Vermette, Boedker, Vrbata, Hanzal, and Sullivan to see the bulk of the offensive minutes.

There are several interesting prospects in Tampa Bay to watch – Vlad Namestnikov, Alex Killorn, JT Brown, and [Cory Conacher](#) all have a shot to earn a roster spot with the Lightning this season.

I ended up picking [Jonas Gustavsson](#) in my annual keeper H2H dispersal draft. I needed a third goalie behind Schneider and Luongo, and the pickings were slim, to say the least. I like his potential (albeit with some risk involved) in Detroit. The talent has always been there. And I

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know Justin Goldman likes him, and he has never led me astray with goaltending in fantasy hockey.

I joined the Sabremetrics network to discuss Alexander Semin:

{youtube}PsxJR4oS5MY{/youtube}